



Emergent Drug Use: *Building Capacity for Community Response in Hartford, Connecticut*

Issue

Illicit drug use is a continually changing behavior. Notable changes include the introduction and spread of new drugs and drug combinations, discovery of new ways to use existing drugs, and development of new populations of drug users. Unfortunately, public health response to emergent drug-related epidemics is slow and fragmented. Indeed, there is growing recognition of the need for new public health surveillance mechanisms that would allow the rapid identification of emergent behavioral trends in drug use, the assessment of their health and other consequences, and the implementation of participatory community responses.

“The only way a community can effectively deal with its drug problems is to start by determining exactly what it is confronting and then tailor its strategies to its own particular situation.”

Dr. Alan I. Leshner
Former Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse

Response

A team of researchers from the Hispanic Health Council in Hartford, Connecticut, and the Connecticut Department of Public Health are engaged in an innovative research project to develop new methods for enhancing surveillance and community response related to emergent drug use. Information on emergent drug use will be collected via observation and interviews and used to develop a community-based public health response to the problem.

The specific aims of the project include the following:

- Develop innovative approaches to identify and track emergent drug use trends;
- Describe emergent drug use trends using key traits and characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and neighborhood of residence;
- Develop a Participatory Community Response Team composed of researchers, health professionals, and community members to develop and implement community-based responses to emergent drug use; and
- Evaluate the project as a transferable community-based public health approach for identifying and responding to emergent drug use.

This project responds directly to the recognized need for research on developing new methods for enhancing public health surveillance, needs assessments, program delivery, evaluation, and translation of research for effective intervention.

January 2005

More Information

For more information about this research project, contact Merrill C. Singer, Ph.D., Director of Research, Hispanic Health Council, 175 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06119
Tel: (860) 527-0856 (ext. 253)
Fax: (860) 724-0437
anthro8566@aol.com

This research grant is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Community-based Participatory Prevention Research Grant Program. This Grant Program is committed to funding public health research that has direct relevance for policy and practice by having researchers invite health professionals and communities to participate in the research process - including identifying research questions of importance to their community and interpreting and applying the study findings in their community. A number of other community-based research grants are supported throughout the United States.

For more information about CDC's Community-based Participatory Prevention Research, please contact the Office of Public Health Research, CDC, 1600 Clifton Rd., MS D-72
Atlanta, GA 30030
Tel: (404) 371-5480
Fax: (404) 371-5215
<http://www.cdc.gov>

